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Introduction

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Introduction

Samuel Salzborn, Eldad Davidov & Jost Reinecke

Peter Schmidt is a leading figure in the fields of sociology, political science and methodology. On the occasion of his 70th birthday, his colleagues collaborated to present him this Festschrift. First and foremost, this is an expression of our deep appreciation of and gratitude to our colleague and friend, Peter Schmidt, for his wide-ranging academic achievements throughout his career, his intellect and expertise he was glad to share with us, his continuous productivity in empirical social research, and the inspiration as well as the many motivating ideas he provided us with. Throughout his extensive career, Peter has been interested (and still is) in many thematic and methodological fields, and we believe that such a volume should reflect this diversity. Not surprisingly, the number of collaborators who expressed their interest to contribute to this festschrift is very large and reflects Peter's productive and rich network of researchers, experts, and practitioners, leading us to consider a new, and in our view, innovative concept for the book. Instead of describing large, comprehensive studies, the contributors present brief research notes that report interesting research topics or questions, or contributions to open new perspectives for such studies. Thus, reflecting this diversity, the list of authors in this volume is composed of both younger and more experienced researchers.

The festschrift is a collection of 40 contributions on theoretical, methodological, and theoretically driven empirical studies about various topics of research in the fields of sociology, political science, and social psychology. The chapters cover up-to-date advances in theory, methods of data collection and analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), models of rational choice, values, attitudes, and behavior, as well as empirical investigations of discrimination, nationalism, authoritarianism, identity, and social structure, all topics touched upon by Peter Schmidt throughout his extensive teaching and research career.

In this introduction we would also like to share some of our memories from our work with Peter by providing a few anecdotes. We have always experienced Peter as humane, sincere, supportive, motivating, constructive, loyal, helpful, and he has been an encouraging teacher, mentor, collaborator, and friend to so many individuals. He has been a true asset to any team he joined, he has brought many people together, and he has both the intellectual and emotional intelligence to lead teams effectively and to cooperate in easy and difficult situations brilliantly. His advice is always worth its weight in gold, and his optimism contagious. Throughout his career, his research has been original, inspirational

and innovative, providing his peers with many new avenues to explore as Peter's originality has always put him ahead of the rest.

Two personal experiences and highlights will be briefly addressed here. Jost Reinecke and other colleagues remember the founding of the working group "Structural Equation Modeling" in April 1986 at ZUMA, Mannheim. Peter was one of the main initiators of the self-organized working group, which still meets on an annual basis 25 years later. Always one for fun, during the 1992 annual meeting, Peter not only provided the entire audience with a brilliant and enthusiastic presentation (as all of us would have expected), he also surprised them with his colorful attire: To assist in the comprehension of his presented topic, his shirt depicted a nice graphical representation of an SEM model.

In addition to his research talents, Peter was and still is a great teacher. Ari Heyder and other colleagues remember the great times they had while working with Peter in various research projects and teaching courses. Ari remembers Peter as excellent in producing an open atmosphere during his lectures to encourage students to ask questions. His remarkable sense of humor has always supported this didactic aim. Students frequently began their questions with the sentence "Maybe this is a stupid question...", but Peter always responded "There are no stupid questions, there are only stupid answers". Sometimes, when explanations were quite complex, Peter used to add his legendary sentence "Is it now more clear, or are you still confused but on a higher level?" Also his metaphor to explain the idea behind global fit measures in SEM models by saying that "We've almost finished squeezing that lemon" to indicate a good fit shaped generations of SEM students. Finally, Ari concludes, not only was working with him a special experience. After hours he also demonstrated his great dancing ability and is particularly well-known for his classic dance move known as the famous "Schmidtian hip swing" (in German "Schmidtsche Hüftschwung"). As many of us can attest to, both professional and leisure activities with Peter have always been a great experience. Thank you very much, Peter!

We would like to thank Uli Wagner and the graduate school on group-focused enmity at the Universities of Marburg and Bielefeld for their financial support in the production of the book, and Lisa Trierweiler for the English proof of the entire book. This book is dedicated to Peter by all the contributors to this volume, by all others who wanted to but were unable to actively participate in the creation of this book, and by the editors. Happy 70th birthday, Peter, and many, many more!